

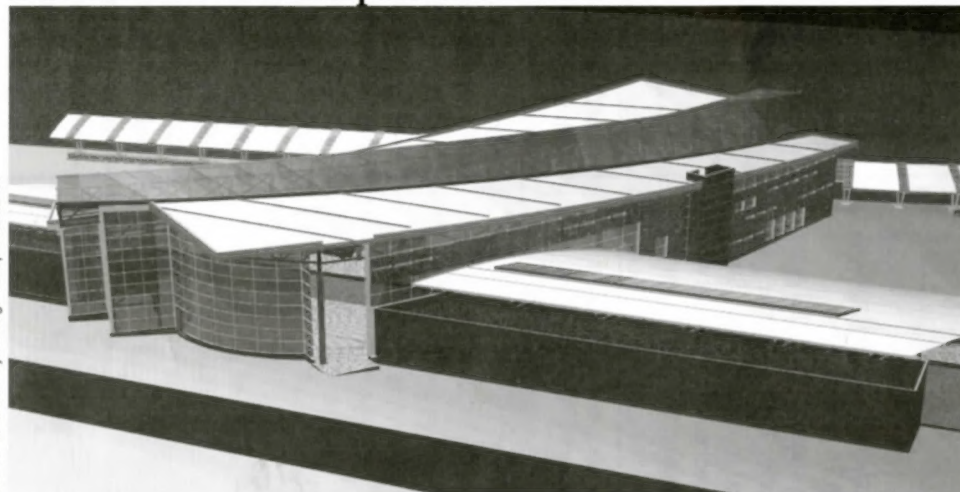
# THE BOSTON INFORMER

No. 63

For people who care about Boston

September-October 2003

## MBTA Blue Line Improvements



Source: Wallace Floyd Design Group and MBTA

◀ **Airport station** - This redesigned station, 500 feet east of the existing Airport station, will open in spring 2004 instead of December 2003. Although not as originally planned, a single level to ease the bus-to-train transfer, the new station will provide improved pedestrian circulation, improved connections to East Boston and Memorial Stadium, elevators and escalators, and flight-status monitors. Architect: Wallace Floyd Design Group.

▶ **Government Center station** - The MBTA is in the process of hiring a new design team to finalize plans for the new station. The station, scheduled to be complete in 2007, will have elevators and escalators and a larger, open mezzanine area with natural light. In conjunction with opening the new Government Center station, the MBTA will close the Blue Line Bowdoin station because of problems involved in modernizing to accommodate six-car trains. A new headhouse near the JFK Federal Building will be nearer the closed Bowdoin station to help minimize the walking distance for those who currently use Bowdoin (scheduled to open July 2005).



Source: MBTA

**MBTA Finances** - Despite increased revenue from the upcoming fare increase, the MBTA's financial situation will remain fragile for years. Even with the fare hike, the MBTA will struggle to fund its \$2.8 billion capital investment program, finance its operating budget, pay down its enormous debt service, and provide enhancements to service.

The MBTA's tenuous financial situation was made clear during the fare-hike debate. Three years into the new "forward funding" program that replaced the reimbursement practice in which the Commonwealth paid whatever debt the MBTA incurred, the MBTA struggles with financing its capital programs. Faced with dedicated but not unlimited funding sources—20 percent of sales tax revenue—the MBTA must figure out how to pay for dozens of transit commitments promised or mandated for years. Projects mandated by Central Artery/Tunnel planners—lots of expansion projects—are

among the most costly along with some projects that actually make sense, such as the Urban Ring/Circumferential Transit program.

Further, although the new MBTA funding program established fiscal reform, the MBTA is burdened with billions in accumulated debt. The MBTA has the highest transit-system debt burden in the country, with 30 percent of revenues going to debt service. Recognizing it cannot continue to rely on bonds to finance capital projects, the MBTA established a 30-year plan to reduce its reliance on bonds, replacing them with pay-as-you-go funding. Moving to funding most capital projects this way will rely heavily on increasing sales tax revenues and aggressive cost controls, both somewhat risky.

The legislation that made the MBTA responsible for financing capital projects also gave it guidance for setting priorities for the five-year capital plan. By law, the MBTA must give priority to projects:

- with the greatest benefits with the least cost
- required as part of the Central Artery project
- required under the Americans with Disabilities Act
- projects that maintain equipment and facilities

Given the MBTA's legal requirements for the capital investment program, its five-year capital program focuses on reinvestment in infrastructure (67 percent), not system expansion (20 percent). System enhancement, which includes new parking and station upgrades, is programmed for just 8 percent of the capital funds. Compared to the past three capital investment programs, this year's system expansion allocation is the smallest, falling from 29 percent three years ago to 20 percent for 2004 to 2008. Pressure will be huge to modernize, build the Silver Line tunnel, expand commuter rail service, build parking, and keep the system in a state of good repair with no money.



## People Movers

**Michael Hogan**, from MassDevelopment to A. D. Makepeace Inc.

**Mike DeAngelis**, from MBTA to Massport.

**Linda Haar**, formerly at Boston Redevelopment Authority, has started the Boston Planning Institute and has been named manager and fundraiser for the Garden Under Glass initiative to develop three surface artery parcels for Mass. Horticultural Society.

**David Nardone**, from Carol R. Johnson Associates to Geller DeVellis Inc.

**Michael O. Leavitt**, former governor of Utah, has been confirmed by the Senate to become Environmental Protection Agency administrator.

**Dineen Crosby, Carol Schlessinger and Skip Smallridge** have left Wallace Floyd Design Group to start Crosby Schlessinger Smallridge LLC, design firm.

**1 MBTA Green Line accessibility** — The MBTA is proceeding with final design for accessibility improvements at Copley station on the Green Line. Plans prepared by STV Inc. and Graham Gund Architects have an elevator at both the inbound and outbound locations. There will also be new ingress/egress stairs on the Boylston Street side of the new Boston Public Library and one on Boylston Street in front of the CVS store.

The elevators are proposed to be of glass and lightweight steel and will be freestanding. Both elevators will be directly in front of historic buildings (Library and New Old South Church) and have been reviewed by Mass. Historical Commission and Boston Landmarks. The MBTA is not subject to review by the Back Bay Architectural Commission. The design is at the 75 percent stage.

**Note on Arlington station:** The MBTA has finally found a location for the elevator—on Boylston Street next to the Arlington Street Church—and has reached an agreement with the church. Construction will start in spring 2005 and be done in late 2006.

**2 Ruggles Street bike lanes** — Boston's third bike lanes were installed on Ruggles Street near the MBTA station. These bike lanes, like the others, were not the initiative of the City's transportation or public works agencies. Northeastern University installed along them with pavement markings and a pedestrian signal done as mitigation.

The lanes are the first piece of the 1997 federally funded "Linking the Corridors" project proposed by Northeastern and Boston Parks and Recreation Department. "Linking the Corridors" is a proposed system of bike paths and lanes from the Fens to the Southwest Corridor and Melnea Cass Boulevard bike paths via Northeastern. The short Ruggles Street lanes are the only element in place.

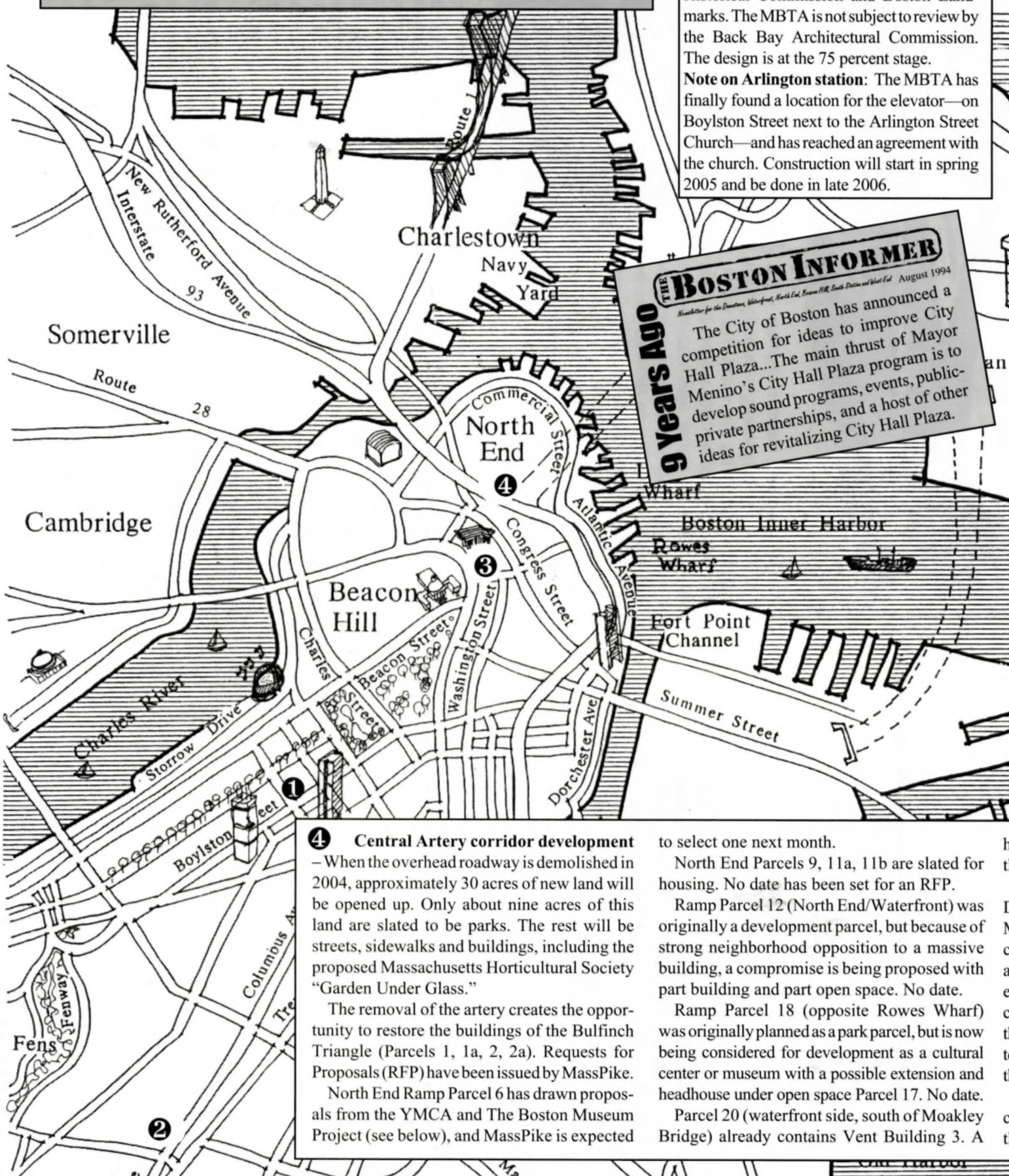
Boston's only other bike lanes are near Shaw's on Morrissey Boulevard (former MDC) and on Perkins Street in Jamaica Plain (Boston Parks and Recreation).

**3 City Hall Plaza: What's Next?** — The 16-member Government Center Task Force, chaired by Robert F. Walsh, has issued its final report, dated July 2003, following nine months of meetings to plan the future of City Hall Plaza. This effort is the latest of many attempts to try to revitalize the barren space.

The Government Center Task Force urged the City to capitalize on MBTA improvements at Government Center station and the City/State Cambridge Street reconstruction and recommended the following:

- Add dramatic new lighting of City Hall
- Fund a feasibility study for a visitors center on the plaza
- Start planning studies for an intermodal bus transportation and parking facility under the plaza, providing bus connections to the Blue and Green lines, plus bus and car parking. Revenue from the parking could fund future projects for the plaza.
- The Plaza Action Committee, a new organization, should be recognized by the Mayor to continue the planning role of the now defunct privately funded Trust for City Hall Plaza.
- The Boston Redevelopment Authority should take over responsibility for planning, operation and maintenance in the interim.

**9 years ago**  
**THE BOSTON INFORMER**  
August 1994  
The City of Boston has announced a competition for ideas to improve City Hall Plaza...The main thrust of Mayor Menino's City Hall Plaza program is to develop sound programs, events, public-private partnerships, and a host of other ideas for revitalizing City Hall Plaza.



**4 Central Artery corridor development** — When the overhead roadway is demolished in 2004, approximately 30 acres of new land will be opened up. Only about nine acres of this land are slated to be parks. The rest will be streets, sidewalks and buildings, including the proposed Massachusetts Horticultural Society "Garden Under Glass."

The removal of the artery creates the opportunity to restore the buildings of the Bulfinch Triangle (Parcels 1, 1a, 2, 2a). Requests for Proposals (RFP) have been issued by MassPike.

North End Ramp Parcel 6 has drawn proposals from the YMCA and The Boston Museum Project (see below), and MassPike is expected

to select one next month.

North End Parcels 9, 11a, 11b are slated for housing. No date has been set for an RFP.

Ramp Parcel 12 (North End/Waterfront) was originally a development parcel, but because of strong neighborhood opposition to a massive building, a compromise is being proposed with part building and part open space. No date.

Ramp Parcel 18 (opposite Rows Wharf) was originally planned as a park parcel, but is now being considered for development as a cultural center or museum with a possible extension and headhouse under open space Parcel 17. No date.

Parcel 20 (waterfront side, south of Moakley Bridge) already contains Vent Building 3. A

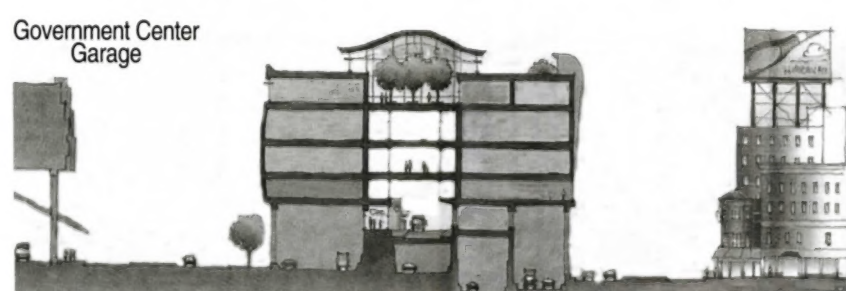
hotel/residential complex will eventually wrap the vent structure. No date.

Parcels 19, 21, 22 (from Moakley Bridge to Dewey Square) have been designated for the Mass. Horticultural Society's winter garden complex, two or three buildings and a garden, all of which would require an admission fee to enter. In spite of the buildings, these parcels are counted as open space. However, there is doubt that Mass. Horticultural will be able financially to undertake this project. No alternative uses for the parcels have been officially discussed.

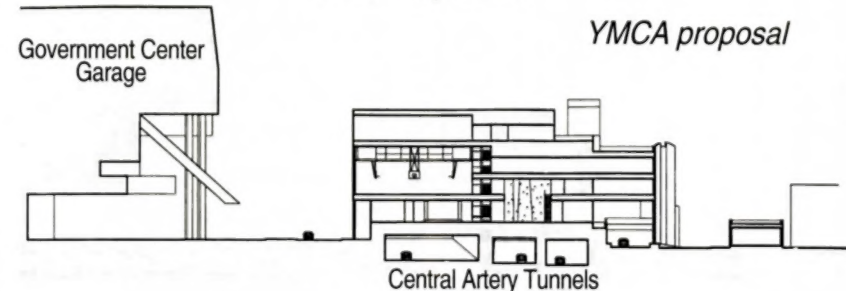
Overall, planning for the open space parcels is considerably more advanced than for the development parcels.

## Surface Artery Development Proposals

### Boston Museum proposal



### YMCA proposal



The first development proposals for the surface artery have been issued for ramp Parcel 6 in the North End (Cross and North Washington streets).

**The Boston YMCA** is proposing a five-story, \$40 million, 125,000 s.f. building with 75,000 s.f. devoted to traditional YMCA uses and 50,000 s.f. leased to other not-for-profit entities. The proposal includes spaces for community use; separate spaces for senior, teens and children; a basketball court; swimming pool; gymnasium; running track on the roof; climbing wall; classrooms; and other facilities. Some areas will be free to residents from the North End, West End and Beacon Hill; others will require membership fees, but the YMCA promises that "no one will be turned away." Architect: CBT.

**The Boston Museum Project** proposes an \$80 million to \$100 million, 197,000 s.f. museum of the history of Boston up

to the 21st century. The museum would include galleries; theater; restaurant; learning center; a hall for large gatherings; winter and summer gardens; and orientation and education spaces for the National Park Service. The proposed building is 83 feet high facing the North End with a highest point of 93 feet, well above the North End zoning limit of 55 feet. Community benefits identified are a 150-seat theater for performances, a learning center available in the evenings for educational programs and other public spaces available without entry fee.

The Boston Museum proponents have said that if its bid for Parcel 6 is rejected, there could be other suitable spaces on the surface artery or elsewhere. Interim architect: The Saratoga Associates.



## Welcome to The Boston Informer!

The goal is simple: provide concise public information on construction projects, planning initiatives, and whatever else affects living and working in Boston. Welcome to *The Boston Informer*!

**The Boston Informer** is published by ATC Information, Inc., six times yearly in Boston, Massachusetts. President: Anthony Casendino; vice-presidents, Anne McKinnon, Chris Fincham.

**The Boston Informer** is available by mail only. \$25.00 per year (cheap!). Questions? Telephone (617) 723-7030, fax (617) 437-1886 or e-mail: [BostonInformer@cs.com](mailto:BostonInformer@cs.com). Web: [www.bostoninformer.com](http://www.bostoninformer.com).

## The Pre-DNC To-Do List

from **THE BOSTON INFORMER**

### To Mayor Menino:

The Democratic National Convention is extremely important to this city. So important that it apparently will be responsible for jump-starting many stalled projects and initiating routine maintenance.

The following projects are vital and we urge you to spare no cost to get them done before July 2004. (Check as many as desired.)

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Boylston St. upgrade               | <input type="checkbox"/> Arborway Master Plan            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cambridge St. reconstruction       | <input type="checkbox"/> City Hall Plaza renovation      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Litter pick-up & graffiti removal  | <input type="checkbox"/> Forsyth Street bike lanes       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Street signs at every intersection | <input type="checkbox"/> Sling-shot ramp to South Boston |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tremont St. Boulevard              | <input type="checkbox"/> City-wide crosswalk striping    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rutherford Ave. redesign           | <input type="checkbox"/> Concurrent pedestrian phases    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Massachusetts Ave. Boulevard       | <input type="checkbox"/> Wheelchair ramps                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commonwealth Ave. Boulevard        |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> American Legion Hwy. Boulevard     |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> West Roxbury trail                 |  |

**Cut checklist out and mail immediately to:**

**Mayor Thomas Menino  
One City Hall Plaza  
Boston, MA 02201**

## You Were Asking

**Q. What's the status of the Saltonstall Building and the new condominiums and retail space around it?**

**A.** The renovation of the Saltonstall office building on Cambridge Street by MassDevelopment, a quasi-public agency, will be finished in the summer of 2004, with the upper floors being leased to a law firm and other non-government tenants and the lower 11 floors occupied by state agencies, the attorney general's office, the Department of Revenue commissioner's office, the Executive Office of Housing and Community Development and the new Commonwealth Development Office. The retail space is being actively marketed and the condominiums are being sold with occupancy in December.

**Q. If security for the Democratic National convention at the Fleet Center next July requires shutting down North Station and the southbound Central Artery tunnel and causing total disruption to residents and commuters, wouldn't it be better to move it to the new Convention Center in South Boston where it could be surrounded by fortifications without disturbing anyone?**

**A.** Good idea.

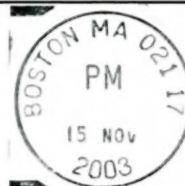
**Q. I heard there are plans for a Boston to Halifax, Nova Scotia, ferry that would leave from Boston Marine Industrial Park. When will service start?**

**A.** Boston-based American Ferries Inc. is working on a Boston to Nova Scotia overnight passenger/vehicle service. The ship would be a "floating motel," operating overnight to reduce the perception of travel time. The ship would operate three times a week with the layover during the day. This would eliminate the need for large staging areas for vehicles waiting to board, as cars would board directly instead of waiting for vehicles to exit. American Ferries Inc. estimates the year-round service could be operating in 2007.

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A publication of ATC Information, Inc.

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